

15. *COSMOSTIGMA RACEMOSA* WIGHT, A NEW HOST PLANT RECORD
OF THE DARK BLUE TIGER BUTTERFLY *TIRUMALA SEPTENTRIONIS* (BUTLER)
(LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE: DANAINAE) FROM KERALA

Faunistic exploration and larval rearings of Lepidoptera during October 2002 at the Government College Campus, Madappally, Vatakara, Kozhikode district, Kerala resulted in a new larval host plant record of the Dark Blue Tiger butterfly, *Tirumala septentrionis* (Butler) (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae: Danainae).

During the study, I collected some butterfly larvae from a small climbing shrub with thin, heart shaped leaves. Upon rearing to maturity, the butterfly was identified as the Dark Blue Tiger *Tirumala septentrionis* (Butler) (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae: Danainae).

The new food plant was *Cosmostigma racemosa* Wight (Asclepiadaceae). The Dark Blue Tiger has been reported to feed on *Wattakaka volubilis* (Asclepiadaceae), *Vallaris glabra*, *Vallaris solanacea* and *Vallaris heynei* (all Apocynaceae) (Wynter-Blyth 1957; Gunathilagaraj *et al.* 1998; Kunte 2000). Recently, a closely related tiger butterfly, the Blue Tiger, *Tirumala limniace* (Cramer) was reported utilizing *Cosmostigma racemosa* as larval food plant (Nair 2002).

The occurrence and successful rearing of the Dark Blue

Tiger *Tirumala septentrionis* (Butler) on *Cosmostigma racemosa* (Asclepiadaceae) confirms it as a new larval host plant.

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16. *PARSONSIA SPIRALIS*: NEW LARVAL HOST PLANT OF ENDEMIC BUTTERFLY
MALABAR TREE NYMPH, *IDEA MALABARICA* MOORE (DANAINAE, NYMPHALIDAE)

Malabar Tree Nymph *Idea malabarica* Moore is a butterfly endemic to semi-evergreen and evergreen forests of the Western Ghats of south-western India. In the larval stages, it is considered a monophagous species on *Aganosma cymosa* (Kunte 2000; Wynter-Blyth 1957). In this note, I report a previously unknown host plant for this species.

Malabar Tree Nymph is a common sight at Arippa Ammayambalam pacha in Kulathupuzha Reserve Forests and Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary (c. 8°-8° 5' - 8° 55' N 77° 15' E) near Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The vegetation is a mosaic of degraded evergreen and semi-evergreen forests and *Myristica* swamps. On July 16, 1996, during my visit to this area, I observed a female ovipositing on *Parsonsia spiralis* (Apocynaceae). *Parsonsia* is a creeper-straggler found in mangrove, riverine moist deciduous and evergreen forests and *Myristica* swamps. I collected the eggs and successfully

reared butterflies from them. Since then, I have repeatedly collected caterpillars from this plant and reared them successfully. It seems, therefore, that *Parsonsia spiralis* is a stable larval host of this butterfly in this area. It is, however, not known whether *Aganosma* is also used here.

Malabar Tree Nymph co-occurs with *Parsonsia* in other forests in southern Western Ghats. It is possible that it uses this plant in these patches as well, but that usage of this host plant has gone unnoticed. Given that this is an endemic and endangered butterfly, it will be important to delineate geographic boundaries or overlap between usage of its two known host plants as this may provide us with an insight into its evolution. It will also be interesting to explore the possibility that it uses other Apocynaceae species in other smaller habitat pockets.